

WE CLAIM:

1. In a computer application program for editing an electronic document and operative to permit the application of formatting to contents of the electronic document through direct application of formatting or through application of one or more styles, a method for restricting the application of formatting to the electronic document, the method comprising:

receiving a request to perform a formatting operation on a portion of the contents of the electronic document;

in response to receiving the request, determining whether the requested formatting operation is permitted; and

in response to determining that the requested operation is not permitted, denying the request to perform the formatting operation.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the requested formatting operation comprises a direct formatting operation and wherein determining whether the formatting operation is permitted comprises determining whether direct formatting of the contents of the electronic document is permitted.

3. The method of Claim 2, further comprising displaying an error message indicating that direct formatting of the contents of the electronic document is not permitted and a list of available styles in response to determining that direct formatting of the contents of the electronic document is not permitted.

4. The method of Claim 3, further comprising receiving a selection of a style from the list of available styles and applying to selected style to a selected portion of the electronic document.

5. The method of Claim 2, wherein the requested formatting operation comprises the application of a style to a portion of the contents of the electronic document and wherein determining whether the requested formatting operation is

permitted comprises determining whether the style is permitted to be applied to the contents of the electronic document.

6. The method of Claim 5, wherein the formatting operation comprises importing new content into the electronic document, wherein determining whether the requested formatting operation is permitted comprises determining whether the new content contains one or more styles or direct formatting that are not permitted to be applied to the contents of the electronic document, and further comprising replacing the styles contained in the new content that are not permitted with a permitted style prior to importing the new content.

7. The method of Claim 6, wherein the permitted style is user selectable.

8. The method of Claim 5, wherein the formatting operation comprises a programmatic operation that would result in the modification of the formatting of a portion of the electronic document and wherein determining whether the requested formatting operation is permitted comprises determining whether programmatic operations are permitted to modify the formatting of the electronic document.

9. The method of Claim 5, further comprising:

determining whether the portion of the contents of the electronic document comprises a portion smaller than a paragraph and whether the style comprises a paragraph style; and

in response to determining that the portion is smaller than a paragraph and the style is a paragraph style, applying the style to the paragraph containing the portion if it is determined that the requested formatting operation is permitted.

10. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform the method of Claim 1.

11. A computer-controlled apparatus capable of performing the method of Claim 1.

12. A method for limiting the application of formatting to the contents of an electronic document, the method comprising:

receiving a request to apply formatting to the contents of the electronic document;

in response to the request, determining whether the request comprises a request to apply formatting directly to the contents of the electronic document or a request to apply a style to the contents of the electronic document;

in response to determining that the request comprises a request to apply formatting directly to the contents of the electronic document, denying the request to apply formatting;

in response to determining that the request comprises a request to apply a style to the electronic document, determining whether the style may be applied to the document; and

applying the style if the style may be applied to the document or denying the request to apply the style if the style may not be applied to the document.

13. The method of Claim 12, further comprising in response to determining that the request comprises a request to apply formatting directly to the contents of the electronic document:

displaying a list of styles available to be applied in the electronic document;

receiving a selection of a style from the list;

and applying the selected style to the electronic document.

14. The method of Claim 13, further comprising:

receiving a request to create a new style; and

in response to receiving the request to create a new style, denying the request to create a new style.

15. The method of Claim 14, further comprising:
 - receiving a request to modify a style; and
 - in response to receiving the request to modify a style, denying the request to modify a style.
16. The method of Claim 15, further comprising:
 - receiving a request to import data containing one or more styles into the electronic document;
 - in response to the request to import, determining whether the styles contained in the data to be imported are prohibited in the electronic document; and
 - in response to determining that the data contains prohibited styles, replacing the prohibited styles with permitted styles prior to importing the data.
17. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform the method of Claim 12.
18. A computer-controlled apparatus capable of performing the method of Claim 12.
19. A method for restricting the application of formatting to the contents of an electronic document, the method comprising:
 - receiving a request to restrict the application of formatting to the contents of the electronic document;
 - in response to the request, providing a user interface for selecting one or more available styles;
 - receiving through the user interface, the selection of one or more styles that may be applied to the contents of the electronic document;
 - determining whether styles that may not be applied to the contents of the electronic document should be removed from the electronic document;

in response to determining that styles that may not be applied should be removed, replacing the styles contained in the electronic document that may not be applied with a style that may be applied;

receiving a request to apply formatting to the contents of the electronic document;

in response to the request, determining whether the request comprises a request to apply formatting directly to the contents of the electronic document or a request to apply a style to the contents of the electronic document;

in response to determining that the request comprises a request to apply formatting directly to the contents of the electronic document, denying the request to apply formatting;

in response to determining that the request comprises a request to apply a style to the electronic document, determining whether the style comprises one or the one or more styles that may be applied to the contents of the electronic document; and

applying the style if the style comprises one of the styles that may be applied to the document or denying the request to apply the style if the style does not comprise one of the styles that may be applied to the document.

20. The method of Claim 19, further comprising denying any request to create a new style or to modify a style.

21. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions stored thereon which, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform the method of Claim 19.

22. A computer-controlled apparatus capable of performing the method of Claim 19.